

B V
4501
R6

An
Idealist
At Large

M. Dunlop
Robinson



Class BV 4501

Book R 6

Copyright No. 4501

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.

AN IDEALIST AT LARGE

AN
IDEALIST AT LARGE

William
BY
W. DUNLOP ROBINSON



THE PILGRIM PRESS
BOSTON NEW YORK CHICAGO

BV4501
R6

Copyright, 1913
BY LUTHER H. CARY

THE · PLIMPTON · PRESS
[W·D·O]
NORWOOD · MASS · U·S·A

\$1.50

© CLA 351255

201

I

AN IDEALIST AT LARGE

..

I

THE impression is abroad that this work-a-day world is no fit place for an Idealist. No sooner does one mention an idealist, however vague a characteristic of life is meant by that term, than the question begins to obtrude itself whether such a person should be at large; whether he should not rather be confined, in a carefully guarded seclusion, apart from the world of tangled and somewhat harsh affairs. Oh yes, we have a place for him, where he may be tolerated, but not in the possession and control of things. The world admits his usefulness, as a sort of mild corrective for a too great entanglement and absorption in the business of living. It is fine to have a bit of idealistic interpretation of

AN IDEALIST AT LARGE

things for the dreaming of an odd moment in the evening twilight, after one has packed away a full day's work and so feels at liberty to give himself to a more or less idle contemplation of the universe.

We divide life into two movements. There is the world of affairs into which we put most of our energy, and where we are led by the single endeavor to bring things to pass. In this world we are materialists, though not philosophical materialists to be sure. If anyone could induce us to stop, in the midst of a day, long enough to discuss our philosophy at all, we should probably use the words of some kind of idealism. But for practical purposes, and for the day itself, we are immersed in material things. It is inevitably so. Here are certain things which must be done—the keeping of a house, the cooking of a meal, the managing of a railway, the writing of a book. We live for these things. So far we are materialists.

AN IDEALIST AT LARGE

And then some of us switch over onto another track for an hour, to ponder upon the spiritual interpretation of life. We think of living as the development and expression of personality. The end of life is that one shall become a thoroughly complete individual, living in a society of other individuals, and in the face of a clear vision of a continuous brotherhood stretching through the generations and into the mystery of the future.

Now the problem is how we are to be always in the same world, not to be continually jumping from one world to the other. A man may be a creature of two worlds, but a large part of the art of life is to learn how to make life a real unity; to have one's fundamental attitude of mind always the same. It is comparatively easy to be an idealist — to let one's thought and feeling be dominated by a spiritual interpretation — in the moonlight of a summer evening, or in the glow of some great emotion, or in the impulse of some humanitarian effort to

AN IDEALIST AT LARGE

rescue or uplift a fellow man. And doubtless one will recognize that in such a moment he is at his best; that now he touches the highest plane of his life. This, he will declare, is his real self. If the Power of the universe could stop him just then and value him by that mood, he would be glad to stake his life upon the valuation.

But how to carry the attitude of spiritual appreciation into the affairs of the days—that's the problem. Anyone can be an idealist once in a while. Any decent person has certain ideals of living which are fine and high. He cherishes a picture of the kind of a person he would like to be. But can he live in the constant attitude of that ideal? There is a recognized place for an idealist in the vacation times and vacation moods of living, but can he roam at large in the kind of a world we have to live in, and achieve anything which can be called a success? Shall we allow that idealist confined in our own souls to go forth, positively, into the business

AN IDEALIST AT LARGE

of the days, and claim the obeisance of all the other forces or motives or interpretations? Shall one dare to find his treasure in the heaven of his own personality, where the thief cannot steal because the thief, being the kind of a person he is, can see nothing there to allure him?

Scarcely has idealism — by which we mean the spiritual interpretation and appreciation of the facts of life — shown a disposition to claim its place, than it is met with the statement that it will not practically work in such a world as this.

Followers of the Teacher of Galilee have been busy through all the Christian centuries carefully reinterpreting his teachings to make them harmonize with a kind of a Benjamin Franklin attitude toward life. That kind of a thing, we are told, might work in some other kind of a world. If the so-called millennium should ever show itself with moral and physical evil removed, it might then be possible to live in such a fashion. Or if we should hit upon

AN IDEALIST AT LARGE

the perfect system of social control, it might be possible. In any case, it is fine that we should cling to whatever idealism we may possess, because doubtless the "Other World" will have a larger place for its use, and it may be well to have a little stock on hand which will pay dividends in that world, for the chances are we shall some day find ourselves there. But for this present earth, under existing conditions, idealism will hardly work. The Sermon on the Mount is a fine piece of literature. It presents an ideal way of life in an ideal world; but this is not an ideal world and therefore, here and now, it is hardly practicable.

You see, we are led back to the question, should an idealist be at large? Or, if anyone desires to put the question in more religious terms, will the teaching of Jesus work in the practical affairs of to-day? Of course one can be so devoted to Jesus as his Lord that he will be glad to follow the teaching in any case and be a martyr.

AN IDEALIST AT LARGE

But that does not meet the situation. Being a martyr is fine — often it is necessary. But a martyr to be useful must be a kind of pioneer. He leaves behind him a way made plain by the very fact of his martyrdom. It is that way we are seeking now, not the martyrdom.

In order to make the way apparent to our eyes it is necessary to do more than show that idealism — or, let us say, the teaching of Jesus — can be made to work “after a fashion” by some sort of effort. It is necessary to show that it is the only attitude that will work, the world being as it is. If it be not true that the teaching of Jesus is the only road to a successful and satisfactory life in this present world and under present conditions, it is difficult to understand why one should attempt to follow it at all. A way which may lead to a far-off possibility, in some other kind of existence, and is not workable in this existence, has not much to lure us who are obliged to live here.

AN IDEALIST AT LARGE

As a preliminary to such an attempt, we may boldly proclaim that the way of living for and upon *things*, the finding of one's main life in bringing certain things to pass — whether it be the managing of a house or a railway — is a failure as a way of life. Why should anyone cling with the tenacity of despair to a philosophy which has proved in a thousand ways that it does not lead to what we want?

The only reason why Jesus condemned the conventional teaching of his day, embodied in the Pharisees, was because it had failed to create a satisfactory life. It had nothing to offer. One might leave Jesus' company if he so desired, but in doing so he would be following a mere negation. The "rich young man" went back to a confessed failure. Jesus may have been mistaken; that is at least conceivable, but there can be no doubt that he lived in the sure belief that all other ways of life offered in the whole horizon of his day failed to furnish life.

AN IDEALIST AT LARGE

Is it any different to-day? The obvious fact about any materialistic way of living is that it does not furnish life. A practical materialist may have a certain amount of real satisfaction, but it comes to him outside of the things he deals with. The man who accumulates millions gets his sense of satisfaction, not from the sheer possession, but from the use of his ability toward a purpose; just as a "safe-cracker" might find a keen joy in his sensitive touch and his artistic manipulation of a lock. The using of one's powers toward an end is a different kind of fact from the mere end itself. The former deals with personal elements, the other with things only.

Suppose a man seeking his happiness and success by what Paul calls living "by sight," this man believes only what he can see, enjoys only what he can touch or experience, finds all the materials of living in his immediate environment. Now the thing to say about such an attitude is not that

AN IDEALIST AT LARGE

it is wrong, not that it is irreligious. The fact about it is that our world is not made for that. It doesn't work. It stakes life upon the most uncertain and unknown facts. Any day may leave such a man stranded.

The uncertainties of life, the continual change in conditions, in personal relations, in all the physical materials of living, are often thought cause for sadness. We call it a mystery and suppose it something abnormal and often absurd. As a matter of fact, however, this is the only normal world we know. It has always been so, and was evidently intended to be so. And in spite of such an obvious consideration, so obvious as to be a trifle commonplace, many people repeat to themselves with evident seriousness and with a pompous show of wisdom, that the way to live is to depend upon the very things which are not dependable. Surely this is an absurdity.

What we need to discover is how to live successfully and practically in

AN IDEALIST AT LARGE

such a world, where no fact is stable and sure except the fact of personality. A person is a spiritual fact. At least—if anyone insists upon a division—we know more about our spiritual self than we do about our material self. We talk about matter and spirit as though it is matter which is known and spirit that is a mystery. But the truth is just the other way around. Matter is the mystery. We do not know what it is. Spirit may be also a mystery, but it is less mysterious than the other, for we are directly conscious of spirit. Therefore, we must begin our search for the way of a successful life by the recognition that it must be the way of a spiritual interpretation. No other way will fit the present world. The man who is a materialist in his practical living and an idealist in parentheses is living upside down. It is precisely in practical affairs that idealism is of greatest worth. If one cares to think that all existences come from matter; that life is the outcome of some mys-

AN IDEALIST AT LARGE

terious strivings of material atoms; that there is no personal God; that all personal relations are subordinate to the endeavor to get a grip upon everything within reach — let him speculate about it at odd moments, but for the sake of any decent success in living let him not try to *live* according to such a philosophy. It will not work. The idealism of Jesus not only is practicable, but it is the only practicable way of life in the world as it is.

II

II

ADMITTING then that an idealist has a right to be at large in this present world, what attitude will he take toward the ordinary facts of life? Here is the fact of work. In the old story of the Garden of Eden a part of the result coming to the man for his disobedience was that he was driven out to toil for his living. Evidently, in the philosophy of the people to whom the story made its first appeal, the ideal of life was to be at ease in a garden where everything needed for one's subsistence was produced without any expenditure of effort. But even they discovered that such a paradise was impossible. Man could not hold it, even when it was given to him. A little more and deeper experience would have revealed the additional fact that such a paradise is not de-

AN IDEALIST AT LARGE

sirable. The way of redemption, according to the ancient story, and according to all experience since, is the way of work. Instead of trying to idealize a kind of life in an impossible garden, our real task is to idealize the thing that is.

Every kind of work needs a mind which can unlock the treasure of poetry and the call for human service stored up within it. But, unfortunately, it seems easier to look back and idealize the old days than it is to idealize our own; probably because facts become hazy in the passage of time and catch, through the haze, a glamour of romance.

Every generation has talked about the "good old days" since Adam left the Garden of Eden, in spite of the fact that life was pretty much of a failure in that old Garden. Perhaps there is more obvious poetry in a gang of men swinging across a field with the rhythmical motion of flashing scythes than in the clatter of a machine drawn by sweating horses. But

AN IDEALIST AT LARGE

all that makes for the idealization of work still remains. Yes, it is increased in this day of an open world. Every task leads the worker, who has an open mind, out into the problems and social movements of the world. It is a gateway into the main currents of humanity's life.

It is an interesting sign-post of this phase of human nature that as soon as one begins to talk about any line of effort he begins to idealize it. Suppose, if one can stretch his imagination so far, that a meeting was held in the interest of maintaining open saloons in a town. What would a speaker on such a platform say? Would he appeal to the benefits to be derived from getting drunk? Would he say in eloquent terms that drunkenness is good for family life and social life? Would he urge parents to hasten to the saloon with their boys and girls and drink all they can stand? Even an audience of saloon keepers would not tolerate such an appeal. The speaker would rather

AN IDEALIST AT LARGE

make an attempt — however pathetic it might prove to be — to idealize the subject by appealing to right and freedom and personal liberty, stealing the language of heaven to use in the devil's battle.

A good test of the social value of work is to see if you can honestly idealize it. If I am working on a house I may do this or that because the boss directs it and with no other thought. I only see the effect. Or I may advance a little to see the wages I am to receive, and plan what I shall do with them in the making of as comfortable a life as possible. Or, I may go beyond that to perceive that this house I am helping to build is to be a place for human life, to be tinged by the love and struggles and tragedies and successes of a family. I am contributing to other lives, to the building of a city. Should not this vision — which is but the actual fact — have its effect upon my work? If it be a good house and well built, a gleam of satisfaction comes to me. I

AN IDEALIST AT LARGE

may be a poor man, and have not much to give to the general life of society. But here is my day's work — here is my gift, my contribution to social welfare — and I have put something of myself into it.

The idealist does not overlook or minimize the necessity of earning a livelihood. He does not forget the necessity, oftentimes, of a struggle for better conditions of labor. But he sees also that work enters into the righteousness of social living and that it should be, in itself, a means of personal enrichment. We serve the world in many ways. But no one can overlook the fact that a man's chief way of service is to be found in his work — whether it be the making of a road or preaching a sermon. The first social demand upon every one of us is that we attend to our own business and that we make that business the expression of a Christian attitude toward the general life. We have begun to insist that public office is a public trust. The next step is an even

AN IDEALIST AT LARGE

higher step than that. It is to insist that every man in a business, or profession, or any labor is also in a place of public trust. Shyster practice at the bar, ignorant practice of medicine, insincere or dull preaching, yellow journalism, poor farming, shoddy building, all these things cheapen the life of the community. It is not saying too much, either, to suggest that many a family life may be lowered or spoiled by bad housekeeping.

And what shall one say of the tremendous task of the business men of to-day? Any constructive movement for the bettering of the workingmen must come through those who are in direct control of production. It is not enough any longer that we insist that employers as a class shall be honest and decent, or even that they shall institute lunch rooms and model tenements for their employees. That would be a good beginning. The time has come when those in control of business should give their minds and energies to the working out of an eco-

AN IDEALIST AT LARGE

nomic system which will establish more just conditions. There needs to be a real sentiment for humanity in the very central office of business. There is this sentiment in the Church and to a large extent in the general public mind, but where it is most needed is in business. Here again all rests upon the idealization of business — the perception that industry itself shall make its contribution to personal values and to social life. The “captain of industry” to-day who only accumulates his millions is not filling his job. He is, to this extent, a failure. Why do we consent to calling him successful? Where he fails is precisely in his business. There has been put into his hands the opportunity of making a real, living contribution to the welfare of his fellows. It is as though the world of humanity, struggling under adverse conditions, were holding up hands of appeal to him, not to give money to this or that movement, but to use his brain, his executive ability, his position and re-

AN IDEALIST AT LARGE

sources of personal life for the great and glorious task of setting the lives of men upon a basis of justice and democracy. Instead of that he turns out railroad iron, or coal, or dollars — and that is all. No right-minded person objects to wealth, whether in the hands of his neighbors or of himself. The question which ought to be asked is a much bigger and deeper question — does a man render his service to the general life, according to his ability and his opportunity?

If a certain group of men had possessed a brotherly feeling, a real sense of the value of individual lives and of the conditions which minister to life, a great industrial struggle would have been prevented. But because these men who are in control of the industry did not have a sense of the personal values connected with their work, the struggle came on. A thousand families suffered, many people died as an indirect result of it, many families were forced into pauperism from which they never recovered, many

AN IDEALIST AT LARGE

others were driven into evil and wretchedness. Now, there is no doubt that social justice will ultimately come, somehow or other. But that the way to its coming should be over such a rough and disastrous road, so filled with the bodies of those who have fallen by the wayside, is due to the failure of society to adjust itself to the needs of the situation. The part of society which had a direct control over the situation, and could have prevented much of the disaster, was precisely this group of men who were in control of the industry. What were they doing? Were they asleep? Oh no, anything but that. They were engaged in making the business a success! And shall we say that they succeeded because forsooth the dividends kept up? Is it not much truer to the facts to say that the business has failed? For the aim and end of any business or work is to produce satisfaction for living beings, and in this it has failed.

The point of it all is that the need

AN IDEALIST AT LARGE

of to-day is for the idealist in business. The so-called practical man, whose practicality consists only in controlling things, may have his place somewhere, but in the main avenues of life we wait for idealists. We must learn to work for God or we cannot succeed in doing what common life demands.

III

III

THE other great sphere of life is the realm of personal relations and contacts. These two realms — of work and of personal relations — cannot indeed be kept apart nor even compared with each other. The one runs at once into the other. All work brings one into some kind of contact with his fellows, either in the process of its prosecution or in the end for which it is undertaken, ministering to the common life. But for purposes of thought one may speak of the two realms of living as though each had an existence of its own. What is the attitude of our idealist in the somewhat tangled contacts with people? In order to be true to the demands of this sphere of life, in order to even see what the actual facts of personal relationships are, in order to be able

AN IDEALIST AT LARGE

to meet and understand people in the practical reality of their lives, it is necessary that one shall idealize people.

The falsity which hides itself in much of our valuation of people is that curious twist of judgment which induces us to accept people at their worst, or at least at something under their best. And yet we do not wish to be valued in that fashion ourselves. Moreover, we know that in our own case from such a basis of judgment one would not arrive at the truth. We are conscious of the fact of to-day, the surface fact, and we are also conscious of a more important permanent fact which is bigger and truer than to-day's deed. Suppose a man should start out to live by the process of placing the valuation of himself upon the basis of his worst moods. Does anyone need to inquire or to investigate in order to arrive at a conclusion as to where that man will land? Would such a man be living out his own true life — while making

AN IDEALIST AT LARGE

his decisions under the shadow of his gloomiest and most unreal moments? In order to be true to oneself, to live out one's own natural life, one must idealize himself. He must value himself according to his best and deepest and must take that for his practical guide, else he is lost.

The same is true of one's relation to other people. We have learned to meet our friends on an ideal plane, we go about the world with something deep within us calling unto the deep, and until that call is answered, no crowd, no summer day, no brilliant bit of landscape, no city's clattering street will preserve the heart from loneliness. What you want is someone you can meet on the plane of your best and deepest life. You idealize your friend, you discount or overlook the little possible irritations and frictions of companionship, valuing him the while according to the reality you have discovered.

We have learned this truth concerning friendship. But is not this an

AN IDEALIST AT LARGE

indication of the true process of all personal contacts? When we fail to idealize we at once begin to misjudge our fellows. There are two very common mistakes in this connection. One is often made when we say things about another by way of passing judgment, especially about his motives, without sufficient evidence. It is surprising how little evidence is required — “somebody told me.” We assume that the “somebody” knows what he is talking about, when very likely he does not.

The other mistake is more common, and more deadly and much less frequently recognized. We value a person according to his worst. We say something which is true. That is, it is accurate, it exactly corresponds to a fact. We know that a certain person did or said a certain thing, and it proves to be exactly as we say. But we forget that accuracy is not always truth. We value a person by a fact of yesterday, and we fail utterly to perceive that that word or deed of yes-

AN IDEALIST AT LARGE

terday is not representative of the person. It represents a fact, but not a person. The report of it is a surface truth, but a deeper and more important lie. Your truth is a falsehood.

Suppose you had been standing by the fire in the court-yard on that tragic night of history when Jesus of Galilee was brought in to his illegal trial, and had heard Peter denying — in the banter of the fireside idlers — that he had ever heard of the man on trial. And suppose afterward, in your zeal for truth, you had gone to Jesus to warn him that his disciple Peter was a liar and a hypocrite and a traitor. And you would have known your facts! Oh, yes! Why! did you not hear him yourself, with your own two ears, denying his master! And perhaps you would have been surprised and a good deal disgusted at Jesus' obtuseness, when your true report was met with a quiet smile. Indeed, you might have been more disgusted to have your report met with a strong,

AN IDEALIST AT LARGE

indignant word of disapproval. It is easy to see now that you would have been telling the biggest lie about Peter you could utter, all the bigger lie because of the accuracy of your words. For your report would represent Peter's actual words on that occasion — and even that without any of the circumstances — but it would completely misrepresent Peter. Jesus knew better, and he did not make the cheap mistake of valuing a man by his worst and weakest moment.

Now, one may object that the only thing we know about a person is what we can see and hear. Yes, but we must judge by all we can see and hear, not by a part of it. Every personal relation needs interpretation, even if we translate another's unspoken or wrongly spoken thought into appropriate words. It is one's business to think of people in large terms, because they are truer terms. But the question again is fundamentally one of attitude. Is a man content with the mere surface facts concerning people

AN IDEALIST AT LARGE

— what kind of houses they live in, what they do, how much they earn, what they say on a certain occasion, what kind of clothes they wear, or is he at least looking for something beyond all this — the depths and possibilities of people? The idealist in this respect is the one who is much more likely to see the actual truth, to be successful in his contacts with his fellow beings.

There is another aspect of this question of personal relationships where the idealist is even more clearly seen to be practically successful. It is in following what we may call Jesus' doctrine of non-resistance. It is not a popular doctrine, partly because we take for granted that it is something less heroic than it is, and partly because many people prefer to be ruled by whim, or sudden impulse, or by other people, rather than to be successful in controlling life from within. We make stumbling progress, largely in a kind of bungling fashion, by the giving and taking of blows. But the

AN IDEALIST AT LARGE

Teacher pointed out that the way of success is the way of no retaliation, “ whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.”

If Jesus were a maker of cheap rules we might suppose this a little rule of action. But being the kind of a constructive thinker he was, it will pay anyone who cares to find out to get his mind around to the Teacher’s point of view and ask himself with some seriousness what he is talking about. It is the point of view of a positive, constructive, successful life. And what it obviously says is that you need not and should not permit another’s wrong attitude to determine what you shall be. Decide your prevailing temper for yourself, and from within yourself. If another man sees fit to be violent, shall I therefore be violent? If another man desires to fight, must I allow him to degrade me into the class of a rowdy or a bully? Are you going to permit your temper, the atmosphere of your personality, to be decided by another person’s en-

AN IDEALIST AT LARGE

mity? "Oh," somebody cries out, "but he has decided it! he has done so and so against me!" No, he has not decided it. You decide it yourself.

Shall a man take pride in exclaiming that he never allows another to step on his toes, that he never receives a blow without returning it in kind and in greater degree? That is the philosophy of any yellow dog prowling about the street. That is the philosophy of the savage, of the primitive man. Surely there is something better for a civilized being. That better thing is precisely what Jesus said — be your own master. Do not degrade yourself into an attitude of mind corresponding to any enemy who happens to come along. Substitute a loving heart for a vengeful heart. Express in your relations to people a temper which flows from your own inner conception of the highest and truest ideal of living, and do not be afraid of overdoing it. You cannot carry such a process too far. For always, your expressions — or at least

AN IDEALIST AT LARGE

the flavor of your actions and words, whatever the actions or words may have to be — correspond to your best vision.

Is such a teaching the doctrine of a crank or a fanatic? Or is it, after all, the way to success in this practical world of ours? Is it not the method of a positive, original, creative kind of life? Is it not the method of a man who knows the kind of a person he wants to be; one who, instead of responding to and following whatever may happen to be his personal environment for the time, sets out to control his life from within. There is not only a place in the world for such an idealist, but that is the only attitude which can be maintained successfully in a world like this, made up as it is of all kinds of people. You may even call this attitude the highest kind of self-assertion, provided you keep well in mind what self it is you are thus asserting. If meekness is a virtue to be cultivated, it must be seen to be a positive, constructive virtue,

AN IDEALIST AT LARGE

and not a merely passive resignation to whatever happens to be the experience of to-day. It means precisely not to be suggestible to every influence, but to manifest, in whatever circumstances, a good will. If I should rise up in my puny pride and exclaim, “I want my will done,” I should not be saying anything of worth. What difference does it make to the world whether my futile person is recognized and followed or not? But if in a great devotion, I should lift up my empty hands and life to the source of all power, and exclaim, “Thy will be done!” in me and in the world, what bigger thing can I say? I am thus linking myself with the Creator; opening the gates of my whole personality for the stream of life to flow into me and through me; taking a positive place in the world as a real force for the Kingdom of Heaven.

IV

IV

IT is the idealist who is able to see the truth of things ; who can rightly interpret the world which is before his eyes, and thus understanding can proceed to guide life according to knowledge. We usually think of science as the body of knowledge, but science is only concerned with the investigation and formulation of the laws of sequences. It has nothing directly to do with their interpretation. Presumably, if we could have a complete body of science, it would be possible to predict with mechanical certainty the result of every action, and possibly even of every thought. In which case, with the result staring one in the face, action might be more uniform and correct. Choices would be obviously narrowed down to the single choice of life or death. Even then it

AN IDEALIST AT LARGE

would be questionable whether character would be in any wise bettered, because choices would have not much more significance than the choice as to which of two ways one will take when one way is directly over a precipice.

Whether such complete knowledge is a good thing or not is but a speculation. We do not live in such a world — at least, not yet. We must make our guesses, if you call them such. And if one is to guess right it is necessary to see more than there is to see.

Why is it that so many people have a half-concealed notion that the language of the New Testament reflects either a life entirely different in very essence from ours, or else that Christians then had visions and perceptions so different from what we know as to be almost unintelligible to us. One reads Jesus' account of his own temptations in the desert (of course he must have told the story himself, doubtless to illustrate some striking doctrine), queer temptations of the

AN IDEALIST AT LARGE

devil, and yet if some accurately truthful witness had been present he would have seen nothing whatever — nothing but a lonely man meditating in the solitude. We read some of his great utterances and wonder why people did not see that this was the Son of God, but the passerby saw only a corner preacher — some queer fellow with a crazy notion, possibly true enough but entirely impractical. We read the description of the day of Pentecost, tongues of fire and the sound of a wind and men set on fire with a great, illuminating idea and a corresponding enthusiasm. But the lookers-on, most of them, saw only some fanatics with a foolish, impossible message. So through the whole New Testament, the language soars into rare heights of experience and leaves us looking into heaven, wondering why the ancient glowing romance of life has departed and whether it is ever coming back.

But it is all a question of interpretation. The facts! — why, the facts

AN IDEALIST AT LARGE

of that day were as mean and sordid and commonplace as facts could be. One wishes some indifferent spectator had written his account of the crucifixion. Would it be like the accounts we have? You would still have the facts — terrible, vulgar, shuddering facts — cruel with hate; a little love if one looked closely enough to see a few weeping women and silent men; a condemned criminal who kept his self-mastery and his manhood; some strange happenings tinged with the mystery of coincidence. You would go away trying to forget — that is all. But that this man was showing forth the divine love even then! — well, to perceive that you will have to use something besides ordinary, practical sight. But that deeper, unseen reality is the important fact of all, beside which all else is nothing. And that is a thing of every day's perception. Only the man who sees that deeper interpretation of life can be truly said to be living in the world that actually exists. Shall one describe actual life

AN IDEALIST AT LARGE

in trivial, commonplace words? Or shall he describe it in the language of the New Testament? Certainly the latter would be much nearer to the truth.

I have not been concerned to define an idealist in accurate formula. One can make the term as hazy as he pleases. And I have not been concerned to plead that everyone should be an idealist. That is as one chooses. I am only concerned to point out that an idealist of some sort is the only person who can manage to live successfully in this present world. There may be some hope for another attitude in some future life, but not in this life. For the idealist is not an idle dreamer; he is not a looker-on, whether in the ranks of wealth or poverty; he is not a mere grumbler because he has nothing, nor a mere consumer because he has all things. He is one who lives a positive, forthright life, recognizing that the source of power is from within. He does his

AN IDEALIST AT LARGE

work in the attitude of one who thereby serves the world. He meets his fellows — friend and enemy — believing with Tolstoy that there are no circumstances in which a human being can be treated without affection. He knows that he is dependent upon God for all the power he has, and he dares to believe that God is dependent upon human beings. There is no way for things to be adjusted according to the laws of righteousness; for inaugurating a system of social control that shall be just and fair; for the possibility of love and forgiveness to become known to men, except through human beings. God cannot do these things — at least, not in the world as it is now — except by way of human agents.



AUG 7 1915

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: Oct. 2005

Preservation Technologies
A WORLD LEADER IN PAPER PRESERVATION

111 Thomson Park Drive
Cranberry Township, PA 16066
(724) 779-2111

BV
4501

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 017 043 777 9

